



TEXAS

Department of State Health Services

THE TEXAS CENTER FOR BIRTH DEFECTS RESEARCH & PREVENTION

The Texas Center is comprised of state health department employees and researchers from various Texas universities with expertise in demographic, maternal, and environmental risk factors for birth defects, survey research, and molecular genetics. Our center has a specific interest in the epidemiology of neural tube defects (major birth defects of the brain and spine). Our partners include:

- * Baylor College of Medicine
- Houston
- * Texas A&M University, Public Policy Research Institute
- College Station
- * Texas A&M Health Science Center, Institute of Biosciences and Technology
- Houston
- * Texas A&M Health Science Center, School of Rural Public Health
- College Station
- * Texas State University
- San Marcos
- * The University of Texas School of Public Health
- Houston
- * The University of Texas Medical School
- Houston
- * University of Texas Southwestern Medical School
- Dallas

In 1996, the Texas Center for Birth Defects Research and Prevention was established as a part of the Birth Defects Epidemiology and Surveillance Branch of the Texas Department of State Health Services in Austin. The mission of the Texas Center is to conduct research studies to understand the causes of specific birth defects, including [participation in] the National Birth Defects Prevention Study.

The Texas Center is in a unique position to contribute to our understanding of what causes birth defects, especially due to the 1,200-mile border shared with Mexico. Health disparities between Texans living along the border with Mexico and those in non-border communities have long been a concern for public health officials.

The national study area for Texas is currently the Lower Rio Grande Valley, which encompasses Gulf Coast industrial cities such as Corpus Christi, as well as Cameron and Webb Counties. **These two counties on the border with Mexico have experienced some of the country's highest neural tube defect rates.**

In addition to participating in the National Birth Defects Prevention Study, the Texas Center is funding local research projects, including studies that examine:



"I felt that the information collected will be very beneficial to the researchers. It brought to my attention the different things that are important to pregnant women."
—Texas mother

- the interaction of metabolic, genetic, and environmental risk factors for certain birth defects of the brain and spinal cord;
- the link between neural tube defects and maternal risk factors, such as maternal diabetes, obesity, smoking, and dieting behaviors;
- the link between birth defects and certain environmental factors, such as hazardous waste sites and air pollution; and,
- patterns and risk factors associated with oral clefts and clubfoot in Texas.

For more information about the Texas Center for Birth Defects Research and Prevention, contact Mark A. Canfield, Ph.D. – Ph: (512) 458-7232 ext. 6158, Email: mark.canfield@dshs.state.tx.us or Peter H. Langlois, Ph.D. – Ph: (512) 458-7232 ext. 6183, Email: peter.langlois@dshs.state.tx.us or visit our website at www.dshs.state.tx.us/birthdefects.